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Graphene-Enhanced Perovskite Solar Cells: A comprehensive review of material innovations and device engineering

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Abstract
The remarkable rise in power conversion efficiency (PCE) of perovskite solar cells (PSCs), now exceeding 26%, has positioned them as front-runners in next-generation photovoltaic technologies. However, persistent challenges related to long-term operational stability, interfacial degradation, and charge carrier recombination hinder their large-scale commercialization. In this context, graphene and its derivatives—including graphene oxide (GO), reduced graphene oxide (rGO), and functionalized graphene nanostructures—have emerged as promising materials to enhance PSC performance and durability. This review systematically analyzes recent advances in integrating graphene-based materials into perovskite solar cells. It begins with an overview of perovskite materials and device architectures, followed by a detailed examination of the optoelectronic properties of graphene. The core of the article discusses how graphene enhances different layers in PSCs—electron transport layers (ETL), hole transport layers (HTL), electrodes, and interfacial layers—through improvements in conductivity, stability, and carrier mobility. Emphasis is placed on synthesis methods, doping strategies, and device engineering approaches that utilize graphene composites, nanoribbons, and hybrids with quantum dots or conjugated polymers. The article also highlights challenges such as interfacial incompatibility, environmental instability, and synthesis scalability. It concludes with future research directions including flexible graphene-based PSCs, environmentally benign materials, and industrial-scale fabrication. This review serves as a guide for materials scientists, chemists, and engineers aiming to design robust, high-efficiency perovskite solar devices empowered by graphene innovations.

Keywords: Perovskite solar cells (pscs), graphene, reduced graphene oxide (rgo), electron transport layer (etl), hole transport layer (htl), stability, photovoltaics, hybrid nanocomposites, flexible solar cells, green synthesis

Introduction

Importance of Renewable Energy and Solar Technologies

The global demand for sustainable energy solutions has intensified due to the dual pressures of fossil fuel depletion and climate change. Renewable energy sources, particularly solar energy, have emerged as pivotal alternatives owing to their abundance, accessibility, and minimal environmental footprint. Among various technologies, photovoltaic (PV) systems have shown exceptional promise in harnessing solar radiation to generate electricity, with continuous advancements in material science and device engineering improving their efficiency and cost-effectiveness [1].

Emergence of Perovskite Solar Cells (PSCs)

Over the past decade, perovskite solar cells (PSCs) have revolutionized the field of photovoltaics due to their exceptional optoelectronic properties, such as high absorption coefficients, tunable bandgaps, long carrier diffusion lengths, and ambipolar charge transport. The rapid increase in power conversion efficiency (PCE) of PSCs—from 3.8% in 2009 to over 26% in recent years—has surpassed the development pace of most competing solar technologies [2, 3]. These impressive gains, coupled with low-cost solution processing and compatibility with flexible substrates, have made PSCs a focal point in next-generation solar cell research.

Limitations of Current PSCs

Despite their significant advantages, PSCs face several limitations that impede their commercial viability. Key challenges include instability under environmental stressors such as heat, humidity, and ultraviolet radiation, which lead to material degradation and device performance loss over time. Moreover, the presence of toxic elements—especially lead—raises environmental and health concerns, necessitating the development of alternative materials or encapsulation strategies. Additionally, issues related to interfacial defects, ion migration, and scalable manufacturing techniques must be addressed to facilitate industrial-scale deployment [1, 4].

Introduction to Graphene and Its Relevance to PSC Improvement

In recent years, graphene and its derivatives have attracted immense attention as multifunctional materials capable of addressing several intrinsic limitations of PSCs. Graphene, a two-dimensional (2D) monolayer of sp^2-bonded carbon atoms arranged in a honeycomb lattice, exhibits extraordinary electrical conductivity, mechanical strength, and transparency—attributes that make it an ideal candidate for various roles within PSC architectures. Graphene and its functionalized forms, such as graphene oxide (GO) and reduced graphene oxide (rGO), have been employed in electron transport layers (ETLs), hole transport layers (HTLs), interfacial buffer layers, and transparent conducting electrodes to enhance charge extraction, suppress recombination, and improve device stability. Moreover, their solution-processability and tunable work function enable versatile integration into planar and mesoscopic PSC configurations [1, 5].

Objective and Scope of the Review

This review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the integration of graphene-based materials in perovskite solar

cells, with a focus on material synthesis, functional roles within device layers, performance enhancements, and long-term stability improvements. By synthesizing recent progress and highlighting key challenges, this article offers insights into the transformative potential of graphene in advancing PSC technologies. The review also outlines future directions for research, including scalable fabrication methods, green synthesis approaches, and the development of next-generation graphene-perovskite hybrid systems for high-performance, stable, and environmentally friendly solar cells.

Fundamentals of Perovskite Solar Cells

Overview of Organic-Inorganic Perovskites (e.g., $CH_3NH_3PbI_3$, $CsPbBr_3$)

Perovskite solar cells (PSCs) derive their name from the crystal structure of their light-absorbing material, which resembles the mineral perovskite ($CaTiO_3$). In PSCs, the most widely studied perovskites adopt the general formula ABX_3, where A is a monovalent organic or inorganic cation (e.g., methylammonium ($CH_3NH_3^+$), formamidinium ($HC(NH_2)_2^+$), or cesium (Cs^+)), B is a divalent metal cation (commonly Pb^{2+} or Sn^{2+}), and X is a halide anion (Cl^-, Br^-, or I^-) [9]. Among these, $CH_3NH_3PbI_3$ (MAPbI$_3$) has been extensively explored for its excellent optoelectronic properties, such as strong absorption in the visible spectrum, a tunable direct bandgap (~1.55 eV), and long carrier diffusion lengths [5, 8].

To address concerns regarding lead toxicity and improve stability, all-inorganic perovskites such as $CsPbBr_3$ have gained attention. $CsPbBr_3$ exhibits high thermal stability and impressive photoluminescent properties, though its relatively larger bandgap (~2.3 eV) limits its absorption of lower-energy photons. Hybrid and mixed-halide compositions are often engineered to strike a balance between efficiency and environmental resilience [5, 8].

Device Architectures: n-i-p, p-i-n, Planar, and Mesoscopic

PSC architectures generally fall into two categories: n-i-p (conventional) and p-i-n (inverted), distinguished by the order of electron and hole transport layers (ETL and HTL) and the direction of charge flow. In the n-i-p structure, electrons are extracted at the bottom electrode and holes at the top, typically using compact and mesoporous TiO_2 as the ETL and Spiro-OMeTAD or PTAA as the HTL. This structure is associated with high efficiency but often requires high-temperature processing.

Conversely, the p-i-n architecture, inspired by organic photovoltaics, starts with a hole transport layer (e.g., PEDOT: PSS), followed by the perovskite and an electron transport layer (e.g., PCBM or ZnO). The planar configuration, where the perovskite layer lies flat without a mesoporous scaffold, enables simpler fabrication, especially for flexible substrates. Mesoscopic architectures, incorporating mesoporous oxide scaffolds (e.g., TiO_2 or Al_2O_3), facilitate better infiltration of the perovskite and improved charge separation but may introduce additional recombination sites.

Key Performance Parameters (Voc, Jsc, FF, PCE)

The efficiency of a PSC is determined by four principal parameters:

- **Open-circuit voltage (Voc):** the maximum voltage available when no current flows, influenced by the energy level alignment and recombination losses.
- **Short-circuit current density (Jsc):** the current per unit area generated when the device is shorted, determined by the light absorption and charge transport.
- **Fill factor (FF):** the ratio of the actual maximum obtainable power to the product of Voc and Jsc, indicative of the quality of the diode characteristics and contact interfaces.
- **Power conversion efficiency (PCE**): the percentage of incident solar energy converted into electrical energy, calculated as PCE = (Voc × Jsc × FF)/P_in.

Record PCE values for single-junction PSCs have now surpassed 26%, rivalling traditional silicon-based technologies while using significantly thinner absorber layers and potentially lower-cost fabrication methods [8, 10].

Challenges in PSC Performance and Longevity

Despite their rapid development, PSCs face several critical challenges that limit commercial deployment. Stability remains the most significant concern, as perovskite materials are highly sensitive to environmental factors such as moisture, oxygen, UV light, and heat, which cause degradation of the crystal structure and interface layers. Ion migration, particularly of halide ions and mobile defects, can lead to hysteresis in current-voltage (I-V) characteristics and long-term performance decline [10, 12].

Moreover, issues such as interfacial recombination, phase segregation in mixed-halide systems, and the toxicity of lead-based materials complicate efforts toward environmentally sustainable and durable PSC modules. Ongoing research is focused on interface engineering, encapsulation strategies, and the development of lead-free or encapsulated perovskite alternatives to address these concerns [10, 12].

Properties and Processing of Graphene and Derivatives

Structure and Electronic Properties of Graphene

Graphene is a two-dimensional (2D) crystalline allotrope of carbon arranged in a single atomic layer of sp^2-hybridized carbon atoms in a hexagonal lattice. It is the fundamental structural unit of other carbon allotropes such as fullerenes, carbon nanotubes, and graphite. Due to its unique geometry and delocalized π-electron system, graphene exhibits outstanding electrical conductivity, high carrier mobility (~200,000 $cm^2/V \cdot s$), mechanical strength (~1 TPa), and optical transparency (~97.7% transmittance for monolayer graphene). Its linear dispersion relation near the Dirac points results in massless charge carriers, enabling ultra-fast electron transport—an asset in solar energy conversion and charge collection applications [12, 14].

Graphene Oxide (GO) and Reduced Graphene Oxide (rGO)

Graphene oxide (GO) is a chemically modified form of graphene containing oxygenated functional groups such as hydroxyl, epoxy, and carboxyl on its basal plane and edges. These groups render GO hydrophilic, dispersible in water, and suitable for solution processing, but they disrupt its

conjugated π-network, drastically reducing its electrical conductivity [15, 18].

Reduced graphene oxide (rGO), obtained via thermal, chemical, or electrochemical reduction of GO, partially restores electrical conductivity while retaining some oxygen-containing functionalities. rGO provides a good compromise between processability and electronic performance, making it valuable for use in electron transport layers, hole transport layers, and interfacial layers in PSCs [19, 22]. Both GO and rGO can be further functionalized to tune their work functions and enhance compatibility with perovskite materials.

Synthesis Methods (CVD, Chemical Exfoliation, Reduction)

Several synthesis methods are used to produce graphene and its derivatives, each offering trade-offs in terms of scalability, quality, and cost:

Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD): A high-quality synthesis method where carbon precursors (e.g., methane) are decomposed at high temperatures over transition metal substrates (e.g., Cu or Ni) to form large-area graphene sheets. CVD graphene is ideal for transparent conducting electrodes due to its uniformity and high crystallinity.

Chemical Exfoliation: Bulk graphite is oxidized to graphite oxide using strong oxidants (e.g., $KMnO_4$ in H_2SO_4), followed by ultrasonication and dispersion in solvents to yield GO sheets. This method is scalable and widely used for functional graphene derivatives.

Reduction: GO can be chemically reduced using reducing agents like hydrazine, ascorbic acid, or sodium borohydride to obtain rGO. Thermal and electrochemical reduction methods are also used to tune electrical properties and oxygen content [15, 19].

Each method affects the material's defect density, conductivity, layer number, and surface chemistry—factors that directly influence performance when used in solar cell architectures.

Functionalization and Doping (e.g., $AuCl_3$-Doped Graphene)

Functionalization and doping are critical for modifying the intrinsic electronic properties of graphene to align with specific energy levels in PSC components. Chemical doping introduces electron donors or acceptors to adjust the Fermi level and work function of graphene. For example, $AuCl_3$ doping induces p-type behavior by lowering the Fermi level, thereby improving whole injection and extraction in photovoltaic devices [19, 22].

Doping also enhances charge selectivity and reduces the sheet resistance of graphene-based transparent electrodes. The trade-off between improved conductivity and reduced transparency must be optimized for each device component. Functionalization with metal oxides, organic groups, or polymers can further improve interfacial contact, solubility, or anchoring to other layers in the solar cell stack [19, 22].

Optoelectronic Properties Relevant to Solar Applications

Graphene's optoelectronic properties make it highly attractive for applications in solar photovoltaics:

Transparency: Monolayer graphene absorbs only ~2.3% of incident light, making it nearly transparent while conducting electricity—ideal for electrodes in transparent and flexible solar cells.

Tunable Work Function: The intrinsic work function of pristine graphene (~4.5 eV) can be modified via doping or chemical functionalization, aligning it with the energy levels of perovskite layers and transport materials [19, 22].

High Conductivity: Graphene's excellent electrical conductivity supports efficient charge extraction and transport, reducing series resistance and recombination losses in PSCs.

Mechanical Flexibility: Graphene's robustness and bendability facilitate the development of flexible, wearable, or stretchable PSCs [19, 22].

These properties, combined with scalability in synthesis and integration, have positioned graphene and its derivatives as key enablers in the ongoing evolution of stable and efficient perovskite solar technologies.

Role of Graphene in PSC Device Components

The integration of graphene and its derivatives into various functional layers of perovskite solar cells (PSCs) has shown remarkable potential in enhancing charge transport, minimizing recombination, and improving device stability. Owing to its tunable work function, excellent conductivity, and mechanical flexibility, graphene is being utilized as a component in electron transport layers (ETLs), hole transport layers (HTLs), interfacial buffer layers, and electrodes, thereby revolutionizing device architecture.

1. Graphene in Electron Transport Layers (ETL)

Graphene-based materials are increasingly employed in the ETL to improve electron mobility and reduce recombination losses. Among these, graphene–TiO_2 composites have garnered attention due to the synergistic effects of TiO_2's favorable conduction band alignment and graphene's high electron conductivity [30]. The incorporation of reduced graphene oxide (rGO) or functionalized graphene into TiO_2 improves charge extraction, suppresses recombination, and reduces interfacial trap states.

For instance, rGO-TiO_2 ETLs in planar PSCs have demonstrated enhanced PCEs compared to pure TiO_2-based devices due to faster electron transport and reduced charge accumulation at the perovskite/ETL interface. In some studies, devices incorporating graphene–TiO_2 hybrids have shown efficiency improvements from ~17% to over 20% with improved hysteresis behavior and enhanced photostability [19, 22].

2. Graphene in Hole Transport Layers (HTL)

The conventional HTL in high-efficiency PSCs is Spiro-OMeTAD, which, while effective, is expensive and chemically unstable under operational conditions. Graphene-based materials have been investigated as potential replacements. Doped graphene, graphene oxide (GO), and functionalized rGO can be engineered to possess suitable energy level alignment with the perovskite's valence band, enabling efficient hole extraction [23, 25].

Doping strategies using materials like $AuCl_3$, MoO_3, or acid treatments improve the p-type character of graphene, enhancing its hole mobility and reducing series resistance. Devices using graphene-based HTLs have achieved PCEs comparable to or better than those using Spiro-OMeTAD, while offering superior stability under humidity and thermal

stress. Furthermore, solution-processable rGO has shown promise in large-area fabrication due to its lower cost and ability to form uniform films. Such devices demonstrated long-term stability over 1000 hours, significantly outlasting Spiro-based systems under ambient conditions [23, 25].

3. Graphene at Interfaces and as Interlayers

Graphene derivatives are also used as interfacial layers between active layers and transport layers or electrodes to suppress ion migration, reduce charge recombination, and enhance mechanical adhesion. For example, ultrathin layers of GO or rGO at the ETL/perovskite or HTL/perovskite interface have shown to passivate surface defects and act as barriers against moisture and oxygen [23, 25].

These barrier layers prevent the ingress of environmental contaminants and minimize out-diffusion of mobile ions like I^- or MA^+, which are key contributors to PSC degradation. Graphene layers have also been explored in Schottky junctions or ohmic contacts, where their tunable work function can form selective contacts with minimal energy losses. The ability of graphene to form seamless, atomically thin interlayers enhances charge selectivity without compromising light transmission—critical for tandem or semi-transparent solar cell designs [25, 29].

4. Graphene Electrodes

As transparent conducting electrodes (TCEs), graphene offers a promising alternative to indium tin oxide (ITO), which is brittle, expensive, and susceptible to cracking under mechanical stress. Monolayer or few-layer graphene films synthesized via CVD can provide high transmittance and good sheet conductivity, especially when doped with agents like $AuCl_3$ [24, 29].

$AuCl_3$-doped graphene electrodes have demonstrated improved conductivity and work function alignment with HTLs, enabling efficient charge extraction and reduced contact resistance [25, 29]. And Heo *et al*. reported that using $AuCl_3$-doped graphene as a top electrode in a $CH_3NH_3PbI_3$-based PSC achieved a PCE of 15.6%, showing strong potential for scalable fabrication [24, 29].

In addition, the mechanical flexibility and chemical durability of graphene make it ideal for wearable or foldable photovoltaics. Devices fabricated on flexible substrates with graphene electrodes maintain performance under bending stress, highlighting its advantage for next-generation portable energy systems [24, 29].

Emerging Graphene–Perovskite Hybrid Systems

The advancement of next-generation perovskite solar cells (PSCs) increasingly focuses on material-level innovations, particularly through hybrid nanostructures that combine perovskites with graphene, quantum dots (QDs), and conjugated polymers. These hybrid systems aim to leverage the unique properties of each component—such as the high conductivity and flexibility of graphene, the tunable bandgap and strong absorption of QDs, and the stability and charge selectivity of conjugated polymers—to overcome limitations in conventional PSCs related to charge recombination, structural degradation, and inefficiencies in photon harvesting.

Graphene–Quantum Dot–Perovskite Nanocomposites

The integration of graphene with perovskite quantum dots (PQDs) has shown promising enhancements in optoelectronic performance. PQDs like $CsPbBr_3$ exhibit excellent quantum confinement effects, high photoluminescence quantum yields, and bandgap tunability, making them suitable for applications in tandem and flexible solar cells. However, challenges such as surface trap states and poor film morphology can limit their performance.

Incorporating graphene or reduced graphene oxide (rGO) into PQD matrices can enhance charge extraction, reduce non-radiative recombination, and stabilize crystal growth. For example, $CsPbBr_3$–graphene nanocomposites demonstrated improved light absorption and increased carrier mobility compared to pristine PQDs. The synergistic interaction between graphene's conductive surface and the PQDs facilitates ultrafast charge separation, leading to enhanced photovoltaic performance [24, 29].

Moreover, such composites often display enhanced photostability, as graphene acts as a barrier to moisture and oxygen while also mitigating ion migration. These features are crucial for developing long-lasting, high-efficiency PQD-based devices [24, 29].

Conjugated Polymer and Graphene-Based Nanohybrids

Another promising direction involves the use of conjugated polymers such as MDMO-PPV (poly[2-methoxy-5-(3',7'-dimethyloctyloxy)-1,4-phenylenevinylene]), combined with graphene and perovskite layers. These materials offer advantages in terms of mechanical flexibility, solution processability, and favorable band alignment for charge transport.

MDMO-PPV–rGO–$CsPbBr_3$ nanohybrids, for instance, show improved interfacial contact, reduced trap-assisted recombination, and enhanced charge carrier lifetimes compared to non-hybrid systems [24, 29]. The π–π interaction between the polymer backbone and graphene sheets supports efficient charge transfer and energy level tuning.

Such hybrid systems can be fabricated through simple solution-based processes, making them suitable for scalable and flexible optoelectronic devices. They also demonstrate excellent photoluminescent properties, indicating efficient exciton dissociation and radiative recombination control [25, 29].

Impedance, Morphology, and Photoluminescence Improvements

Hybridizing perovskites with graphene-based nanostructures has also been shown to significantly affect device impedance characteristics, surface morphology, and photoluminescence (PL) behavior. Impedance spectroscopy studies reveal reduced charge transfer resistance and improved carrier lifetimes in graphene-incorporated PSCs, attributed to better interfacial contact and improved charge dynamics [25, 29].

Morphologically, the addition of graphene can promote uniform perovskite crystal growth and passivate grain boundaries, which reduces defect states and suppresses non-radiative recombination. Atomic force microscopy (AFM) and scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images frequently confirm smoother, denser, and more homogeneous films in hybrid systems [30, 35].

Photoluminescence quenching observed in graphene–perovskite hybrids further confirms efficient charge extraction. In particular, PQD–graphene composites demonstrate stronger and more stable PL emissions,

indicating potential applications not only in photovoltaics but also in light-emitting devices and photodetectors [30, 35].

Stability and Environmental Performance

While perovskite solar cells (PSCs) have rapidly achieved high power conversion efficiencies (PCEs), their long-term operational stability remains a critical hurdle for commercialization. Environmental factors such as moisture, oxygen, UV radiation, and thermal stress significantly degrade perovskite materials and interfacial layers. Recent advances have shown that graphene and its derivatives can mitigate these degradation mechanisms, acting as protective layers, interfacial barriers, and encapsulating agents to improve environmental resilience.

Long-Term Performance and Degradation Mechanisms

The main degradation pathways in PSCs include phase instability, ion migration, and interfacial degradation. Exposure to moisture leads to hydrolysis of the perovskite, forming lead iodide and volatile organic by-products, which compromise the film's optical and electronic properties. Thermal cycling can induce morphological changes, crystallization defects, and stress-induced delamination at interfaces [30, 35].

Ion migration, particularly of I^-, MA^+, and mobile vacancies, results in hysteresis, performance drops, and irreversible degradation. Graphene's ability to suppress ion diffusion and chemically passivate grain boundaries can delay these degradation routes and support stable operation under real-world conditions [30, 35].

Moisture, UV, and Thermal Effects

Moisture sensitivity is one of the most detrimental factors for PSCs. Water molecules interact with perovskite crystals, leading to hydration and eventual decomposition. Incorporating graphene layers at the perovskite interface or as an outer barrier reduces water ingress due to graphene's hydrophobic nature and impermeable lattice.

UV light can cause photodegradation of transport layers like TiO_2 and organic components. Graphene layers, when used in conjunction with UV-stable transport materials, serve as UV-absorbing and charge-stabilizing barriers, enhancing photostability.

Thermal stress impacts both the organic cations in the perovskite lattice and the interfacial integrity between layers. Graphene, with its excellent thermal conductivity (~5000 W/m·K), helps dissipate heat across the film, reducing localized stress points and improving thermal tolerance [32, 35].

Encapsulation with Graphene Composites

Encapsulation is a standard method to protect PSCs from environmental degradation, and graphene-based encapsulants have shown exceptional promise due to their flexibility, impermeability, and transparency. Few-layer graphene (FLG) films can be transferred onto PSCs to form ultrathin, conformal protective layers without compromising device performance.

Moreover, composite encapsulants combining graphene with polymers (e.g., PMMA, PVA) or oxide matrices (e.g., ZnO@rGO) offer multifunctional protection, combining moisture and oxygen barrier functions with mechanical durability. Studies report significant retention of PCE over >1000 hours of operation under ambient humidity and illumination when such encapsulation strategies are employed.

These graphene-based encapsulation technologies pave the way for flexible, lightweight, and stable perovskite modules that can operate in diverse environmental conditions, essential for real-world deployment [32, 35].

Challenges and Limitations

Despite the significant advancements in the use of graphene and its derivatives for perovskite solar cells (PSCs), several challenges hinder their large-scale commercial adoption. These include issues related to scalable synthesis, interfacial engineering, and economic feasibility. Understanding and overcoming these limitations is essential to transition from laboratory-scale demonstrations to commercially viable products.

Scalability of High-Quality Graphene Synthesis

One of the primary barriers to integrating graphene in PSCs is the scalable production of high-quality, defect-free graphene. Although chemical vapor deposition (CVD) methods produce high-purity monolayer graphene suitable for transparent electrodes, they are expensive, energy-intensive, and difficult to scale consistently without introducing grain boundaries and wrinkles.

Alternative methods, such as liquid-phase exfoliation or chemical reduction of graphite oxide, offer higher scalability but yield lower quality materials with oxygenated defects and poor electronic properties. The lack of a standardized, cost-effective synthesis method for large-area graphene with consistent electrical and optical performance remains a key bottleneck [32, 35].

Efforts to optimize the roll-to-roll transfer of CVD-grown graphene, improve exfoliation yields, and develop green synthesis routes (e.g., bio-derived reducing agents for GO) are ongoing, but have yet to reach the robustness and reproducibility required for industrial-scale manufacturing [35, 39].

Interfacial Defects and Chemical Incompatibility

Integrating graphene into PSC architectures often involves interfaces with diverse materials such as TiO_2, perovskites, and organic transport layers. These interfaces can introduce interfacial energy mismatches, mechanical delamination, or chemical degradation due to reactive functional groups, leading to charge recombination and instability.

Moreover, while graphene is chemically inert, its derivatives—such as graphene oxide (GO) and reduced graphene oxide (rGO)—contain oxygenated groups that may interact unfavorably with perovskite precursors or organic solvents. This can hinder crystal formation, degrade film uniformity, or result in phase segregation within the active layer.

Proper surface engineering, doping, and functionalization of graphene are necessary to align energy levels and reduce chemical incompatibility. However, this adds further complexity and variability to the fabrication process, making standardization difficult.

Cost vs. Benefit Analysis for Commercial Applications

Although graphene offers clear performance advantages—such as enhanced conductivity, flexibility, and environmental stability—its cost-effectiveness in commercial PSC modules remains questionable. The price of high-quality graphene films is still significantly higher

than traditional materials like ITO or PEDOT:PSS, and the performance improvement is not yet sufficient to justify large-scale replacement in all cases [38, 40].

In addition, the incorporation of graphene layers typically requires extra processing steps, such as wet transfer, doping, or high-temperature annealing, which increases the manufacturing complexity and cost. These additional steps may offset the gains in stability or efficiency unless streamlined through scalable fabrication strategies.

Thus, techno-economic analyses are needed to quantify the trade-offs between performance gains and processing costs. Only by demonstrating that graphene-enhanced PSCs offer superior long-term energy yields and durability over competing technologies can they be considered commercially viable [40, 42].

Future Directions

The field of graphene-enhanced perovskite solar cells (PSCs) continues to evolve rapidly. To bridge the gap between laboratory innovation and real-world deployment, future research must address not only efficiency and stability but also environmental sustainability, flexibility, and scalability. Emerging areas such as green synthesis, wearable photovoltaics, and AI-guided design offer exciting pathways for advancing PSC technologies toward commercial viability.

Biocompatible and Green Synthesis Routes

Environmental and health concerns associated with traditional chemical processes used in graphene and perovskite synthesis have prompted a shift toward green, low-toxicity methods. The use of plant extracts, amino acids, and biopolymers to reduce graphene oxide (GO) into functionalized reduced graphene oxide (rGO) presents a sustainable alternative to hazardous chemicals like hydrazine [42, 45].

Similarly, efforts are underway to synthesize lead-free perovskites (e.g., tin- or bismuth-based materials) that retain optoelectronic performance while reducing ecological impact. These materials, when combined with green-synthesized graphene, offer potential for eco-friendly, biocompatible solar modules, suitable for indoor use, biomedical devices, and low-carbon energy systems.

Flexible, Wearable, and Transparent PSCs

The mechanical flexibility of graphene makes it ideal for integration into flexible and wearable photovoltaic systems. Its high conductivity, low thickness, and optical transparency support the development of bendable, lightweight, and semitransparent PSCs for next-generation applications such as solar windows, portable electronics, and smart textiles.

Recent demonstrations of fully flexible PSCs with graphene electrodes and transport layers have achieved impressive PCEs exceeding 15%, while maintaining performance under mechanical stress (e.g., bending radius <10 mm). Combining perovskites with stretchable substrates and encapsulating with graphene-based barriers further enhances mechanical robustness and operational durability [45, 47].

AI-Guided Materials Optimization

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are becoming indispensable tools in materials science, offering rapid screening and optimization of graphene–perovskite composites. AI models trained on experimental databases can predict ideal dopants, interfacial modifiers, and processing conditions to enhance charge transport and stability.

For instance, data-driven approaches have successfully identified optimal graphene-to-perovskite ratios and processing temperatures that maximize PCE while minimizing degradation pathways. Integration of AI into the fabrication pipeline can significantly accelerate device development cycles and reduce experimental overhead.

The combination of high-throughput experimentation and AI-assisted analysis is expected to revolutionize how we design multi-functional nanocomposites for solar energy harvesting.

Prospects for Industrial Manufacturing and Integration

Commercial integration of graphene-enhanced PSCs depends on their compatibility with roll-to-roll printing, scalable coating techniques, and stable encapsulation methods. Advances in ink formulation, solution processing, and vacuum-free fabrication are enabling pilot-scale production of PSCs on flexible substrates.

Collaborations between academia, startups, and industries are exploring ways to incorporate graphene-based layers using slot-die coating, spray coating, and lamination methods compatible with existing PV manufacturing infrastructure. Moreover, standardization in material quality and process control is essential to ensure reproducibility and meet certification standards (e.g., IEC 61215 for PV modules [47, 49].

With continued interdisciplinary efforts, the prospect of deploying graphene–perovskite modules in consumer electronics, building-integrated photovoltaics (BIPV), and Internet-of-Things (IoT) devices is becoming increasingly realistic.

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